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# Working together to prevent family violence

Alberta

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

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# Working together ...

Violence in the home strikes at the heart of our society. In our lifetimes, violence will touch all of us directly or indirectly in our immediate or extended families.

I, along with several of my cabinet colleagues including Elaine McCoy, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, Nancy Betkowski, Minister of Health, and Solicitor General, Steve West, share our government's commitment to prevent family violence. We are working in partnership with community organizations and individuals to help those who are affected by family violence. ***Working together to prevent family violence*** presents the Alberta Government Action Plan and highlights some ongoing initiatives to deal with this serious social and criminal problem.

I am confident that our partnership will be effective as we work together to prevent family violence.

Sincerely,

John A. Oldring
Minister
M.L.A., Red Deer South

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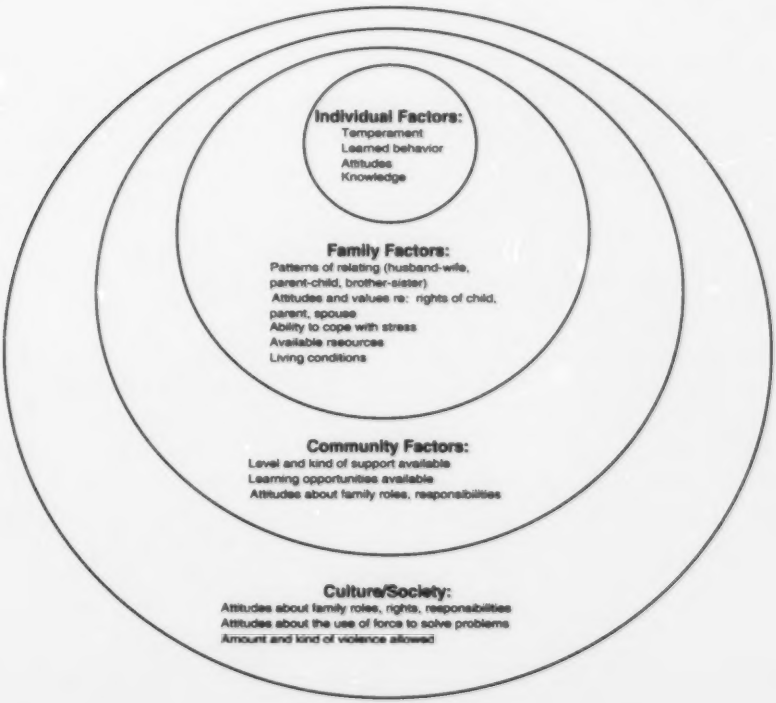
# Family violence in Alberta

Family violence — abuse of family members by family members — is a problem that affects all Albertans. Every day in this province women and men, both young and old, are subjected to various forms of abuse. It may be physical, sexual, emotional or financial. Most frequently it involves some form of coercion, threat, punishment or violent expression of feeling. The most common victims are women, children and the elderly.

Many factors contribute to abusive behaviour in families. Those factors, or characteristics, are found in the individuals involved, their family structures and interactions, their communities and society in general. Effectively addressing family violence requires action at all levels.



Alberta is in the forefront in responding to the family violence issue. As public awareness has increased, thousands of caring Albertans have become involved in working to prevent family violence in their communities: offering services, raising funds, volunteering their time and efforts to help those affected by family violence. In cooperation with agencies and governments at all levels, they are working on challenges within their own communities. This partnership and commitment to action have been the strength of Alberta's response.

The Alberta Government has played an active role in this partnership. In 1984 Family and Social Services established the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence to provide support and leadership in developing an effective response to family violence. The Office also distributes educational materials, develops government policies, and funds women's shelters and prevention projects. The Office for the Prevention of Family Violence is the only one of its kind in Canada. In 1990 the United Nations commended Alberta for its progress in addressing family violence through the efforts of this office.

Also in 1990, Alberta was instrumental in developing the Lake Louise Declaration on Violence Against Women. The Declaration was adopted by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments in Canada and has spurred action across the country on the serious problem of violence against women.

In addition to the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, many other Alberta government departments and agencies address the needs of families affected by violence, providing social assistance, emergency and long term housing, foster homes, family support services, police protection, child welfare services, treatment for addictions, medical attention, legal aid services, guidance counselling in schools or mental health therapy. The Criminal Code and the Child Welfare Act mandate the involvement of police, social workers, the courts and corrections.

Alberta Government activities are coordinated by the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence which is chaired by the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence. The 11 member departments on this Committee have developed a ***Framework for Action on Family Violence*** which has been endorsed by the Alberta Government. The principles and objectives that make up this Framework are outlined on the following pages, along with initiatives to be implemented in 1992-93. As resources permit in future years, the government will undertake additional initiatives that meet expressed community needs, and are in keeping with the principles and objectives laid out in the ***Framework for Action***.

The government initiatives outlined in this document are but a part of what must remain a larger Alberta response to family violence. All Albertans — individuals, communities and governments at all levels — must continue to work cooperatively to eliminate family violence in this province.

# Framework for Action on Family Violence

The Government of Alberta is committed to working in partnership with individuals, communities and other levels of government to eliminate family violence. In carrying out its role, the government will act in keeping with the following principles and objectives:

## Principles

Government of Alberta efforts to eliminate family violence will be based on the following principles:

- Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. This includes the right to be free from abuse within one's family.
- The inherent worth and dignity of each family member must be respected.
- Family violence is not a private family matter. It is a public issue that has impact on all Albertans.
- Responsibility for dealing with family violence must be shared by individuals and their families, by the community and by all levels of government.
- The most effective and long term way to prevent family violence is to promote healthy family functioning, based on the equality of women and men.
- All Albertans should have access to information about family violence and a range of service options to address their needs.
- Initiatives should be designed to promote an appropriate level of self determination.

## Objectives

The Government of Alberta has identified the following five areas for continuing action:

- **Prevention**: Promote healthy family functioning and eliminate factors which contribute to abusive behaviour.
- **Protection**: Ensure that a greater number of victims are protected.
- **Intervention/Treatment**: Minimize the effects of abuse on victims and help abusers to change their behaviour.
- **Education/Coordination**: Contribute to common understanding of family violence dynamics and facilitate a coordinated response in addressing issues.
- **Policy:** Improve the response of current government programs through policy review and refinement.

# 1992-93 family violence initiatives

As part of its continuing commitment to eliminate family violence, the Alberta Government will undertake 27 initiatives in 1992-93. These initiatives were recommended as priorities by the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence and are in keeping with the principles and objectives identified in the ***Framework for Action on Family Violence***.

## Prevention

- Incorporate family violence prevention and healthy family functioning themes into Alberta's school curricula. (Alberta Education)
- Develop community based services which promote and support healthy family functioning. (Alberta Health)
- Introduce Phase II of a family violence prevention campaign for youth which will build on the 1991 "Talk It Out" campaign. (Office for the Prevention of Family Violence)
- Initiate a native liaison project to help native communities address family violence issues. (Office for the Prevention of Family Violence)

## Protection

- Provide operational funding for a new shelter for abused women in Edmonton's inner city. (Office for the Prevention of Family Violence)
- Provide operational funding for a shelter for youth in Edmonton's inner city. (Family and Social Services)
- Provide operational funding for Edmonton's Lurana Family Centre, an overflow shelter for abused women. (Office for the Prevention of Family Violence)
- Match community and municipal operational funding for a Native women's shelter in Calgary. (Office for the Prevention of Family Violence)
- Increase funding for satellite shelters in Fairview, High Level, Whitecourt, Grande Cache, and Lac La Biche, all of which require additional staff to remain open 24 hours a day. (Office for the Prevention of Family Violence)
- Increase the funding for existing shelters by 2.5 per cent. (Office for the Prevention of Family Violence)
- Provide capital funding for an additional women's emergency shelter. (Alberta Municipal Affairs)

## Intervention/Treatment

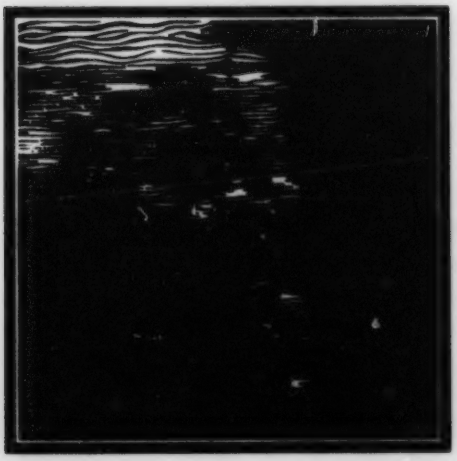
- Begin to address the treatment needs of adult perpetrators of family violence, adult victims, adult survivors of child sexual abuse and child victims. (Alberta Health)
- Introduce new programs for female offenders who are victims of family violence and enhance programs for sentenced offenders who are perpetrators of family violence. (Alberta Solicitor General)

## Education/Coordination

- Enhance the family violence policing initiatives introduced in October 1990. (Alberta Solicitor General)
- Implement the third year of the **Family Violence is a Crime** public awareness campaign. (Alberta Solicitor General)
- Introduce training on family violence in a therapeutic context for Alberta Health's mental health clinic staff. (Alberta Health)
- Offer family violence training for corrections staff. (Alberta Solicitor General)
- Introduce a two day **Understanding Wife Abuse** course for social workers. (Alberta Family and Social Services)
- Develop a training program for crown prosecutors. (Alberta Attorney General)
- Work cooperatively with key professional and community organizations to develop a provincial child protection investigation protocol. (Alberta Family and Social Services, Alberta Health, Alberta Education, Alberta Attorney General, Alberta Solicitor General)
- Distribute a new and expanded edition of **Breaking the Pattern: How Alberta Communities Can Help.** (Office for the Prevention of Family Violence)
- Provide orientation sessions on family violence issues and the role of teachers in identifying and reporting child abuse to regional staff and interested school officials. (Alberta Education)

## Policy

- Release a discussion paper, **Elder Abuse and Neglect**, which is part of the **Looking to the Future** series. This series of discussion papers will lead to the development of an action plan, which will include strategies for responding to elder abuse. (Alberta Ministry Responsible for Seniors)
- Review Supports for Independence policy to ensure that it reflects the needs of victims of family violence. (Alberta Family and Social Services)
- Develop a new funding and staffing model for women's shelters in consultation with the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. (Office for the Prevention of Family Violence)
- Give priority to proposals for family violence projects which are submitted and meet the criteria for funding from the Victims' Program Assistance Fund. (Alberta Solicitor General)
- Investigate conviction and sentencing patterns of offenders to help assess the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. (Alberta Solicitor General and Alberta Attorney General)



# Looking to the future

Achieving a future free from family violence will take continuing commitment from individuals, communities and all levels of government. The Alberta government will continue contributing to this partnership in future years by implementing new initiatives and by coordinating its activities with the responses being made at the community level.

In keeping with the principles and objectives laid out in the ***Framework for Action on Family Violence***, the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence has identified the following initiatives for future action by the Alberta government as resources permit:

- A Family Help Line.
- Community based family violence prevention projects.
- Public awareness campaigns that will create a new generation with new attitudes. Such campaigns are to be focused on those at home, at school, at work, and at play.
- Increased funding for existing shelters in recognition of the range of services they provide and their need for additional staff.
- Additional shelters.
- Community based treatment programs for perpetrators of family violence, adult victims and adult survivors of child sexual abuse.
- Treatment programs for children who are victims of family violence.
- Hospital emergency department crisis response teams in urban and regional hospitals.
- A comprehensive multidisciplinary training program on family violence for staff in seven government departments.

# Partnership within Government

Over the years, the departments represented on the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence have been partners with individuals and communities in efforts to eliminate family violence — each department contributing according to its mandate. Some examples of programs and services provided by these departments are listed below along with a brief description of each department's mandate.

## Alberta Family and Social Services

Alberta Family and Social Services is responsible for protecting and promoting the social well-being of Albertans by working with business, government and community partners and by providing social and financial benefits which support individual and family responsibility and independence. This includes ensuring protection for those who are victims of violence in the home. Example initiatives:

- Supports prevention projects throughout Alberta through Community Project Funding.
- Declares each November Family Violence Prevention Month and distributes material to communities and agencies for them to use in promoting the month and educating the public about family violence.
- Administers the Child Welfare Act which guarantees protection of Alberta's children. The purpose of child protection services is to ensure that children are protected from physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Resources are dedicated to support and strengthen families and reduce risk to children. A range of services is available to children who are unable to remain safely with their natural families.

- Funds 15 shelters and six satellite shelters which provide safety and support to abused women and their children throughout Alberta.
- Issues a quarterly newsletter, Focus, to service providers and agencies in the field of family violence, interest groups, schools, libraries, and other government offices.
- Has an automated resource centre with a collection of more than 5,000 books, articles and other educational materials on family violence which are available for government and community use. New publications are added annually.
- Offers consultations and educational presentations to professionals and community groups.
- Distributes more than 50 publications on family violence, primarily on abuse of women, children and the elderly in families. Some materials are available in languages other than English including Spanish, French, Polish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Punjabi, and Arabic.
- Introduced a comprehensive Women's Shelter Information System, unique in Canada, in January 1992. This system is the only automated data base in Canada that can track clients and maintain accurate and comprehensive information about abused women and their children. This information allows the government to develop programs and allocate resources appropriately throughout the province. Development of the system was made possible through the cooperation of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.
- Developed standards for women's shelters in partnership with the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters which ensure Alberta women receive consistent quality care throughout the province.

Representative: Katrine McKenzie
Director
Office for the Prevention of Family Violence
Phone: 422-5916

## Alberta Health

Alberta Health contributes to making Alberta a province where everyone has the opportunity to achieve quality of life through good health. This is made possible, in part, through the treatment services provided by this department. Example initiatives:

- Provides treatment for both victims and perpetrators of family violence who suffer from a mental illness through community mental health clinics.
- Provides funding for community-based programs across Alberta which offer prevention, early intervention and early detection services for children at risk of abuse.

Representative: Regina Beckett
Provincial Coordinator
Children's Services
Mental Health Division
Phone: 427-2816

## Alberta Solicitor General

Alberta Solicitor General is responsible for providing public safety and services through the delivery of programs in the areas of policing and correctional services in Alberta. Example initiatives:

- Introduced family violence policing initiatives in October 1990 which outlined a three-year strategy to address the crime of spousal assault. The primary goals of the policing initiatives are to reduce the incidence of family violence through early police intervention and to increase public awareness of the criminal nature of family violence.
- Requested that police begin recording their response to all family violence calls. (Alberta police services responded to 3,524 family violence incidents between April 1 when the request was made and September 30, 1991. In 54 per cent of the cases, charges were laid.)
- Awarded grants from the Victims' Programs Assistance Fund to the following groups to assist in providing services to victims of family violence:

- Police-based victim service units in Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Leduc, Sherwood Park, Fort Saskatchewan, Redwater, Cochrane, Fort McMurray and Bonnyville.
- Community-based victim service organizations such as the Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society, the Yellowhead Emergency Shelter for Women, Grande Prairie Providing Assistance, Counselling and Education (PACE), Central Alberta Sexual Assault Centre, the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton, and the Calgary Society for the Investigation of Child Abuse.

- Initiated police training to reduce the incidence of family violence and the time spent on family violence calls. Since the fall of 1990, training has been offered to delegates from every municipal police service and the RCMP.
- Launched a **Family Violence is a Crime** public awareness campaign in January, 1991 in partnership with Alberta Family and Social Services and the Alberta Women's Secretariat. The Solicitor General and Women's Secretariat expanded the program in 1992.
- Produces a quarterly newsletter on family violence issues for the enforcement community.

Representatives:
Gloria Ohrt
Manager
Family Violence and Crime
Prevention Division
Law Enforcement Division
Phone: 427-3457

and

Ruth Hofer
Manager
Contracted Services
Correctional Services Division
427-3441

## Alberta Attorney General

Alberta Attorney General is responsible for the administration of justice in Alberta. This includes prosecuting cases of family violence pursuant to the Criminal Code of Canada. Example initiatives:

- Is currently reviewing criminal justice initiatives in other jurisdictions, including the Winnipeg Family Violence Court, in order to develop an effective criminal justice response for Alberta which will help reduce repeat offenses and make the process less traumatic for the victim.
- Designated a specific prosecutor in each Chief Crown Prosecutor's Office (1991), to focus on family violence. This person
  - acts as liaison with local agencies and police services
  - assists in developing protocols, and
  - receives and distributes information and case law to other Crown Prosecutors.

Representative: Peter Teasdale
Regional Director
General Prosecutions Branch
Criminal Justice Division
Phone: 427-5050

## Alberta Education

The focus of Alberta Education's policies and curriculum is on helping children become confident and capable of making informed decisions. By assisting children to obtain positive life skills, and by helping them develop compassion and understanding for others, many factors that contribute to family violence are addressed. Example initiatives:

- Implemented compulsory courses at all levels of schooling to help students develop positive personal and family relationships and understand changing male and female roles. Students have an opportunity to develop these skills and gain an understanding of family and personal relationships during their study of major themes that continue through each of three programs: the elementary health program, the junior high health and per-

sonal life skills program and the senior high career and life management course.

- Developed **Protocol and Guidelines for Child Welfare Workers and School Personnel**, in partnership with **Alberta Family and Social Services** and the Alberta School Board Association. The protocol provides a procedure for handling suspected cases of child abuse.

Representative: Audrey Dean
Director
Legislative Services
Phone: 427-2041

## Alberta Advanced Education

As part of its overall mandate in the area of post secondary education, Alberta Advanced Education supports the work of 85 Further Education Councils. These councils offer social issue courses and workshops in areas such as family violence prevention. Programming of this kind has become the highest priority of many Further Education Councils. Example initiative:

- Offers 25 courses specifically addressing family violence through Further Education Councils. These include "Anger Management for Men/Women," "Understanding Wife Abuse," "Family Negotiations," "Family Conflict Resolution," "Impact of Family Violence on Children," "Education for Abusive Men," "Recovery from Sexual Abuse," "Parent Burnout," "Outbursts — How to Deal with Angry Children," "Learning to Live Without Abuse," and "The Art of Fighting Fair (Couples)."

Representative: Keith Anderson
Consultant
Literacy
Phone: 427-5624

## Alberta Municipal Affairs

Alberta Municipal Affairs provides capital funding for special purpose housing such as women's emergency shelters. It also oversees the management of social housing projects. Example initiative:

- Provided capital funding for the construction of a shelter for youth in Edmonton and three women's emergency shelters in Fort McMurray, Grande Centre and Edmonton since 1987.

Representative: Gary Gordon
Manager
Needs Analysis and Program Evaluation
Phone: 427-8147

## Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC)

AADAC encourages and assists Albertans in achieving personal, family and community health free from alcohol and drug abuse. Its clients often have a history of family violence either as victims or perpetrators. Example initiatives:

- Involved in a variety of community initiatives, usually of an interagency nature, that address some aspect of family violence.
- Offers training to its staff and other professionals (such as those working in shelters) on how to deal with family violence issues in the context of addictions.
- Established and implemented guidelines for dealing with family violence in their treatment programs.

Representative: Carolyn Nutter
Director
Central Alberta Field Services
Phone: 427-4263

## Alberta Women's Secretariat

The Alberta Women's Secretariat coordinates government's response to the wide range of issues affecting women in the province. It has identified violence against women as one of the most fundamental barriers to women's achievement of equality in our society. Example initiatives:

- Works cooperatively within the public and private sectors to eliminate violence against women. Family violence initiatives have been a major component of the Secretariat's **Plan for Action for Women**. The Plan, a government-wide framework for undertaking initiatives to improve the status of Alberta women, was introduced in 1989-90. In 1992-93, the Plan for Action for Women will be dedicated to the elimination of family violence and amalgamated with the initiatives being implemented under the Framework for Action on Family Violence.

- Coordinates activities with other Canadian jurisdictions. In cooperation with Status of Women Ministers across Canada, Alberta's Minister Responsible for Women's Issues was instrumental in developing the 1990 **Lake Louise Declaration on Violence Against Women** which states that:

  - women are entitled to live in a safe environment
  - offenders must be held accountable for their behaviour
  - elimination of violence against women requires a response including prevention, public education, services and enforcement of the law
  - every individual, community and government in Canada must do everything possible to help the women, children and families affected by violence; we must all work together to achieve a society free from violence.

- Distributes **Building Blocks: a National Strategy on Violence Against Women**, a document prepared by Status of Women Ministers and released in 1991 to inspire continuing action across Canada.

Representative: Ann MacKay-Drobot
Research Officer
Economic and Social Policy Division
Phone: 422-4927

## Alberta Agriculture

As part of a range of services designed to support the agricultural industry, Alberta Agriculture provides advice and assistance to farm families and plays an important role in connecting rural families with programs and services needed in times of crisis. Example initiative:

- Produced a publication, **A Child is Hurting. How can I help?**, to provide 4-H leaders with information on how to recognize children in need of protection and what steps to take to ensure their well-being.

Representative: Aileen Whitmore
A/Branch Head
Home Economics Branch
Phone: 427-2412

## Alberta Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs

Alberta Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs ensures that the interests of Albertans are represented at the federal level. It negotiates for funding to support provincial programs in a number of areas including those addressing family violence.

Representative: Amy Gerlock
Associate Director
Social Policy
Phone 427-6553

# Community partners

Across this province, municipal governments as well as individuals and organizations, service clubs and businesses are taking responsibility for eliminating family violence. Following are a few examples of the many activities taking place throughout Alberta.

- Kinette, Knights of Columbus and Lions Clubs consistently provide financial support and purchase appliances and furnishings for Alberta's 21 women's emergency shelters and satellites.
- More than 60 churches in the province were involved in Family Violence Prevention Month activities in 1991.

## North

- Young people in Fort MacKay were provided with information on family violence through a series of presentations organized by a local youth club.
- The City of Grande Prairie sponsored a Wellness Wednesday series for its employees. This initiative began with panel presentations and discussions on family violence.

## Edmonton

- Azimuth Theatre Association, Sherwood Park, toured Alberta with its award-winning play, ***Maelstrom***. The play focused on perpetrators of family violence and was presented to the public, students and those in Young Offenders Centres.
- Levi Strauss and Co. Canada Inc., Edmonton has demonstrated its concern for employees who may be victims of violence by offering a specialized Employee Assistance Program and distributing educational materials on family violence to them.

- In June 1991, the City of Edmonton released the ***Mayor's Task Force on Safer Cities Report of the Family Violence Committee.*** The Report identified initiatives in five key areas. The City of Edmonton has made considerable advances in meeting objectives in these areas.
- The Edmonton law firm of Field and Field celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1990 by donating $75,000 to the YWCA's Support and Awareness Program for victims of violence. In 1991, they continued their commitment by sponsoring a fund raising breakfast in support of this same program.
- Edmonton's Chamber of Commerce has written to its members highlighting the impact of family violence on their community and business and urged them to become involved in some way in addressing this issue.

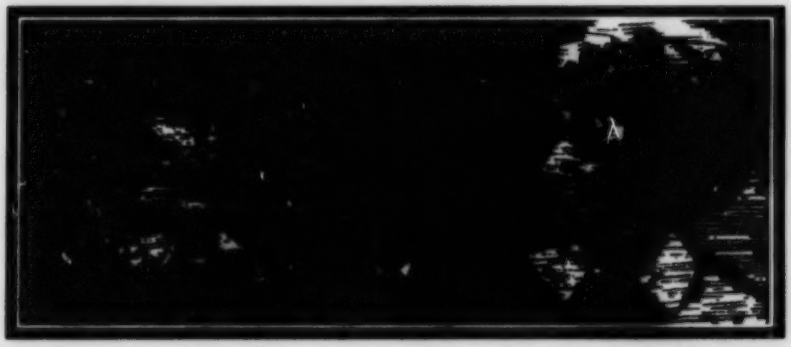
## Central

- The Stettler Society for Prevention of Family Violence sponsors a volunteer driver system to provide transportation and support for women going to Camrose or Red Deer shelters.
- A speakers' bureau listing men who will address family violence issues has been established by the Red Deer Family Services Bureau.
- The Hanna Family Violence Prevention Committee has purchased resources on family violence prevention for their municipal library. The library donated 200 hours of staff time to assist in the selection and ordering process, with the local newspaper providing advertising and article space at no charge.
- The Bow Valley Women's Resource Centre, Canmore offers a series of workshops for professional men who work with young men who are abusive or at risk of being abusive. In addition, a workshop retreat for male teens with the focus on prevention of abusive situations was held.

## Calgary

- In March 1991, the City of Calgary released the ***Mayor's Task Force Report on Community and Family Violence*** which included more than 40 recommendations related to family violence. Many of the Task Force recommendations have been implemented or acted on, particularly in the areas of education, coordination and criminal justice response.

- The City of Calgary distributed a leaflet on family violence with all its utility bills.
- Woods Home, Calgary has developed a video ***Breaking the Code*** directed at adolescents who are at risk of developing violent behaviour. This video has been incorporated into Calgary Police Service training and is being considered for use in the city's school system.
- Larry and Elaine Ryckman, of Calgary have offered to donate a large house to be used as a shelter in Calgary for abused women of native origin.
- The Calgary Home Show included a display on family violence prevention.
- The Prevention of Family Violence Collective, Calgary, hosted a conference **Healing the Spirit — A journey to explore the issues of family violence as it relates to Native Families.** More than 500 native and non-native individuals and representatives of companies and organizations attended from across the province.
- Four students at Van Horne High School, Calgary, researched and helped design a pamphlet on child abuse which provides information on what abuse is, why it happens, and identifies sources of help. The pamphlet, entitled "Child Abuse Prevention for Adolescents," is being used by the Red Cross Society as part of their child abuse prevention program in schools.



## South

- Interact Theatre, Medicine Hat developed and produced a socio-drama on family violence, ***Breaking the Cycle***. This production was presented in schools throughout Southern Alberta and to the public in Medicine Hat, Taber and Lethbridge.

- The Brooks Newell Community Action Group in Brooks has developed a pamphlet for persons with disabilities on the prevention of all forms of family violence.

- Lethbridge City Council has approved a list of proposals to help eliminate violence, particularly against women, children, the frail and the elderly. The anti-violence proposals include improved lighting, increased participation by community services in preventing violence, a police commission safety audit of the downtown core, and enhanced public participation in neighbourhood protection plans.

This publication highlights the strong commitment of Albertans to working in partnership to prevent family violence. Together, we can make a difference.